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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat
Kevin Savetz

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~ Spyware? Go to Prison! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Halo 2 Finished!
~ Copyright Bill Dies! ~ 'Do Not Call' Stands! ~ CCAG 2004 News!
~ Spam Scam Shut Down! ~ New Mortal Kombat Out! ~ First Spyware Case!
~ Play Games, Win Cash! ~ Raster Music Tracker! ~ CSI Coming for Xbox

- * New Anti-Spyware Bill Passes *-
- * Judge Challenges EU Position On MS! *-
- * Logitron Games Are Released As Abandonware *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Okay, so we had a couple of near-frost nights this past week, but the weather during the day has been terrific. Great fall weather as far as I'm concerned! We were in Maine last week to play some golf, but we were likely there perhaps a week or two early to see some terrific foliage. It was beautiful there regardless. Maine has to be one of the most beautiful states in the country. And yes, I am biased - having been born and raised there.

So, what's happening out there lately? Spyware and spam seems to dominate the tech news these days. A couple of tough anti-spyware bills have been passed this week. That's some good news. Spam - seems to be taking a beating but just keeps coming back like a bad hemorrhoid. Oh well.

Until next time...

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Logitron Games Released As Abandonware

Logitron has release their 3 great games under 'Abandonware Licence'!

Now you can download Sheer Agony, Aazohm Krypt, Operation Skuum and more for free at :

<http://logitron.atari.online.fr/liste.htm>

It's a french website but games are in English version.

RMT - Raster Music Tracker - New Version 1.17

Changes in RMT 1.17

- Menu Track:

- * Load and paste to actual track.
- * Save actual track as...
- * Clear all duplicated tracks, adjust song.
(Note: This function is also included in Song - All size optimizations.)
- New block effect/tool (menu Block - Effect/tools or Ctrl+F or toolbar button "FX") function: "Modify notes, instruments and volumes".
- Function "Song - Prepare song line with unused empty tracks (Ctrl+P)" was changed to "Song - Insert new line with unused empty tracks (Ctrl+P)" and now it insert this new songline into actual song line positions, not to line below.
- Function "Song - Prepare duplicated song line (Ctrl+O)" was changed to "Song - Insert copy or clone of song line(s) (Ctrl+O)" and now it shows new copy/clone dialog for setting of parameters for this very helpful function.
- Menu Song:
 - * Put new empty unused track to actual song position (Ctrl+N).
- "File - Export as XEX Atari executable msx" there is possible to:
 - * define 4+1 lines now. 5th line is showed instead of 4th line if Atari SHIFT key is pressed.
 - * define color of rasterline meter.
- "File - Export as SAP file" there is possible to define hexadecimal song line numbers for more SAP module subsongs. Initial values are prepared by automatic subsong-detection algorithm, but you can change it at pleasure.
- Added "*.tm8" extension in Import TMC open file dialog.
- New option in Config dialog (menu View - Configuration):
 - * F1-F8 keyboard layout:
 - RMT original keyboard layout.
 - Layout 2:
 - F1=track edit, F2=instrument edit, F3=info edit, F4=song edit
 - F5=Play, F6=Play from start, Ctrl+F7=Play tracks, F7=Replay tracks, F8=Stop

(This layout is for F5-F8 keys identical with some other renowned module tracker programs.)

Accessories

- Atari RMT player RMTPL104.XEX (new version 1.04) is in "player" directory.
(There is short description in RMTPL104.TXT file.)

New songs

- Song "hexxagon.rmt" (Hexxagon music & sfx, raster/c.p.u., 2003)
- Song "basix.rmt" (Basix, by raster/c.p.u. 2004)
- Song "gemx.rmt" (Gem'x song, Atari version by raster/c.p.u. 2004)

in "songs" directory.
(SAP file "hexxagon.sap" with 6 subsongs is in "exports/sap" directory.)
(SAP file "basix.sap" with 9 subsongs is in "exports/sap" directory.)

Bug fixes

- Revision of keyboard control.
NumLock mode is turned off all the time when tracker main window is active, so that key combinations Shift+NumBlockKeys are working as well as state of right Shift key can be correctly detected now.
- Internal improvement of TMC import algorithm (better recognition of identical tracks arised from other tracks by song shift parameter).
- If tracker window isn't active, MIDI events on channel 0 are ignored.
- Other small corrections and bug fixes.

Enjoy it!

Greetings, raster/c.p.u.

URL: <http://www.infos.cz/raster/atari/rmt/rmt.htm>

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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JagFest Coming to CCAG Show

For Immediate Release.

The CCAG (Classic Computing and Gaming) committee is proud to officially announce CCAG 2004, held October 23, 2004 from 4:30 PM to 10:30 PM at the St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Mentor, Ohio. Based on the list of confirmed exhibitors, this will be the 4th and best CCAG:

DigitalDinos (<http://www.DigitalDinos.com>)
FMH Games Alan "Pitfall Harry"
Hewston VideoGame Connection (<http://www.VideoGameConnection.com>)
Treyonics (<http://www.Treyonics.com>)
Briel Computers (<http://www.VitageComputer.tk>)
TI Chips (<http://www.members.cox.net/smkee11/tichips/newsletter.com>)
Positronix
John Masterson The NUON Dome (<http://www.nuon-dome.com>)

Kevin Manne of The NUON Dome is also bringing his NUON Dome goodies and the Atari JagFest with him. That's still not all! With the addition of the JagFest, Songbird Productions a leading Atari Jaguar and Lynx developer will have their items available for demo/sale. Now that's definitely worth the price of admission, which just happens to be free. That's right FREE attendees and exhibitors! If you want to be an exhibitor, time is short and exhibitor spots are going quick.

For more information, email info@ccagshow.com today! For the most current show information, please check out the official CCAG web, <http://www.ccagshow.com/>. The web site is updated every weekend with the most current information and a message board is up 'n running for all CCAG show goers and exhibitors. Besides the latest information, there are pictures and reviews from past shows. Don't miss out on this free event! For more information, visit the official CCAG web, <http://www.ccagshow.com/>, or email info@ccagshow.com today!

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Okay, let's get right to my main interest for the past several months... voting.

I heard on the news a couple of days ago that voter registration here in the United States is at an all-time high, and that if everyone who registers to vote this year does so (along with even the average number of 'repeat' voters), we will have the largest voter turnout by percentage.

Am I good, or what? Who's da man? That's right, baby, I'm all it!
Hahahaha.

I just want to state for the record that I was out ahead of the pack when I started preaching and hammering at you about registering. Well, we're coming up to the finish line pretty quickly, and soon you won't have to listen to me yak about it.

Now, there are... ummm... one or two international friends who could care less about voting in the U.S., but most of them vote in their own countries. A lesson learned from across the ocean is still a lesson learned.

Hey, look at where we are these days. We're the 'last remaining superpower', and other countries are telling us that we're 'not doing it right'. Now, we can get all kinds of indignant and bluster at the audacity of a former communist country or banana republic, but we could also take stock and actually learn something. I often find it helpful to look at things through someone else's eyes.

It kind of reminds me of the early days of the ST, when PC users would look at our trusty 1040's and gasp. Of course, the only thing constant is change. PCs got better and the ST stayed pretty much the same. I'm still a little bit in awe of what the ST was in its day, even though the machine I'm typing this on now is orders of magnitude faster than my trust ST was.

But as I've said many times before, even more important than the machine itself were the people that it allowed me to meet along the way. Some have wandered off, some waver in and out of newsgroups and such, and some are always there. Regardless of how often we communicate, there'll always be that feeling of community that I've never found in any other computer group. That, along with the fact that my Atari computers always had their own distinct personalities, made the Atari world special to me. Now THAT's a vote you can take to the bank.

Thanks to those who asked about my problems with the herniated disc and related stuff.

Okay, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st Newsgroup
=====

Joseph Place asks about fonts for HighWire:

"I'm wondering what fonts others are using for Highwire? I get a message something like "font for pre #"" is not monospace, ignored."

Are there some monospaced fonts somewhere that I can install to avoid these messages?"

Peter West tells Joseph:

"The easiest to use is your screen font, though the Atari one is a bit ugly. I can think of four others: The most common is Monaco Mono (which I use as my default screen font). This is a bitmapped font, available in 8, 9, 10 and 20 pt, and doubled-up (somewhat blocky) as 16, 18 and 40pt; there is also an ISO 8859-1 variant with a different extended character set in 10pt and doubled 20pt. I'm sure there are many more - I personally find Monaco the easiest to read.

Common Speedo vector fonts include various Couriers (10 Pitch and SWA) and Monospace 821. In TrueType there is Courier and Lucida Console. All of these are available in virtually all sizes. Again, there will be many more, such as OCR-A and -B ..."

Lonny Pursell adds:

"You can assign the "system" font, but it will not look so hot. Or if you have NVDI it includes at least one font called "Monospace 821". Not sure where you would get additional fonts."

Joseph tells Lonny:

"Thanks! That seems to be working fine for now (system font). I previously tried the "Monospace 821" but it caused a crash for some reason."

Tim Anderson plays "Name... That... Game":

"I can't for the life of me think of the names to two games that I used to play, nor can I find the disks.

The first one was played on a grid where you had to place "atoms" into squares and when they were full they exploded taking over the opponents "atoms"

And the second one was some kind of space thing, t'was a first person perspective where you had a floor that was made of tiles and you had to rotate the view to keep the tiles at the bottom of the screen, the aim was to go between planets and there were things like shops and stuff on the way."

Ronald Hall tells Tim:

"Hmm, the first one sounds vaguely like "Atomino", if I remember correctly."

'Chris' adds:

"Sounds like PLOP, I used to play that a fair bit, even wrote a falcon version of it."

Andrew Carpenter jumps in and interjects:

"Oh yes, I remember PLOP. It was great fun!"

Tim replies:

"Ahhhhh, I've managed to find the first one :-) it was Chain Reaction.

Still no idea on the 2nd one though, I seem to remember I had it on a cover disk so it was probably on one of the ST Format ones.

Is there a catalogue of cover disks anywhere? maybe I could find it on one of them.

Little Green Desktop has all the mags and guess the games has come to an end. <grin>

The game in question was Psyborg, now where to get it?"

Andy Ball asks about MiNT:

"What's the current version of MiNT?
Is TOSWIN (or something similar) still available for it?"

Mark Duckworth tells Andy:

"The current version is 1.16.0 beta. Toswin2 is very mature and is available. I use it daily for my cli activities now that I discontinued my use of vconsoles.

<http://www.sparemint.org> "

Janez Valant adds:

"I can't live without vconsoles. So I still use 1.16 from February rather than new version."

Andy replies:

"I hadn't realised that virtual consoles had been added to MiNT. Is there a reason that they're not in the 1.16.0 beta?"

Mark adds:

"I highly recommend easymint. It'll help you get setup. When the setup is all finished, toswin2 will be installed and ready to use. Search google and you'll find where to download it."

Janez explains about vconsoles:

"Virtual consoles are part of MiNT for ages, but they weren't added to

EasyMiNT distribution, since they make some probs with applications running in supervisor mode (aka Apex media and such) making keyboard input not working in those apps if vconsoles are active. Vcons are not part of kernel, but as separate driver. MiNT 1.16.0 freezes in matter of minutes with vconsoles driver, i guess due to changed interrupt handler maybe. 1.16 alpha from late January works fine. Between January and official beta release i didn't compile kernels, so i don't know when exactly problem occurred.

By the way, I did make easy to install vconsoles package for EasyMiNT, so they aren't hard to add, and they are switchable in /etc/rc.d/rc.local so they can be switched off."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but my neck is still giving me some trouble, and sitting at the keyboard is a bit of a challenge sometimes. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Work On 'Halo 2' Finished!
"~~~~~" Robotech: Invasion!
Gamers Battle for Cash!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Work On Halo 2 Game 'Finished'

The sequel to the best-selling Xbox Halo game is finished, say its makers.

Developers Bungie said it had handed over the code to Microsoft for final testing.

"There are still many steps between now and the game's arrival on shelves, including the not-insignificant process of actually manufacturing millions of copies of the game," said Bungie.

Halo 2 is due to go on sale on 9 November in the US and two days later in the UK.

The original Halo: Combat Evolved won universal acclaim when it was

released for the Xbox in 2001.

The first-person sci-fi shooter went on to sell more than four million copies, making it the biggest Xbox blockbuster yet.

Fansites and specialist game websites have been buzzing with rumours as the sequel nears release.

Barring any unexpected shenanigans, Halo 2 is done and dusted, simultaneously, for every region it will be released in worldwide Bungie posting

Halo 2 has already won several game awards, even though work has only just finished on the title.

"We are basically done making Halo 2," said Bungie in a posting on its website.

"Seriously. Barring any unexpected shenanigans, Halo 2 is done and dusted, simultaneously, for every region it will be released in worldwide."

The team said the game was now in Microsoft's hands for final testing, adding this was "just a matter of routine".

This would suggest that the game is on course for its release in the US on 9 November, to be followed by a launch across Europe on 11 November.

Bungie has had a team of 55 people working on the game for at least 16 hours a day to make sure it was ready in time.

Now it seems they are planning to take a short break.

"Folks are taking off on vacation," said Bungie.

"Most people will take a week or two, some up to a month, but almost everyone will be back here in time for the game launch, to witness it first hand."

In an interview with the BBC, Bungie studio manager Pete Parsons said the team were looking to do something different after Halo.

Robotech: Invasion Ships For Playstation 2 And Xbox

Global Star Software, a publishing label of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. announced today that Robotech: Invasion for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and the Xbox videogame system from Microsoft is now available in stores across North America.

"Robotech: Invasion is the game anime fans have been waiting for," said Christoph Hartmann, Senior Vice President of Publishing at Global Star Software. "It blends classic first person shooter gameplay with the universe that has captivated Robotech fans worldwide for nearly 20 years."

"The Robotech license provides a great platform for creating exciting and compelling games," said Eric Peterson, President of Vicious Cycle Software. "From the beginning, we wanted to create an immersive game that was packed with characters, locales and events from the show. Fans will be able to

recognize the effort that has been taken to integrate the game into the Robotech universe, while newcomers will get an intense first person shooter experience."

Developed by Vicious Cycle, Robotech: Invasion embarks players on an original adventure that takes place during the latest timeline of Harmony Gold's animated series, titled 'Robotech: The New Generation.' Players can strap on their transformable Cyclone armor and fight alongside Robotech forces in 15 single player missions, as well as with friends in head-to-head online multiplayer, with support for up to eight players on both PS2 online and Xbox Live.

Robotech: Invasion is rated 'T' for Teen and is available now for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox videogame system from Microsoft, each at a suggested retail price of \$39.99. For more information on Robotech: Invasion please visit <http://www.globalstarsoftware.com>.

Midway Set to Revolutionize Fighting Genre as Mortal Kombat: Deception Ships to Stores Nationwide

Midway Games Inc. announced that Mortal Kombat: Deception, the latest entry in the company's best-selling Mortal Kombat franchise, has shipped for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system and the Xbox video game system from Microsoft. The game will be backed by the most extensive marketing campaign in Midway's history. The multi-million dollar marketing support for Mortal Kombat: Deception includes television, cinema, print and online advertising, innovative point-of-purchase materials and specialized events.

"Midway, along with the millions of MK fans around the globe, is extremely excited about the release of Mortal Kombat: Deception," said Steve Allison, chief marketing officer, Midway. "The Deception team has worked diligently over the past two years to ensure that this MK title will be the best yet. Not only will it be the first ever 3D fighter to be playable online via both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox Live, but the team has also succeeded in meeting a goal that some thought wasn't going to be possible...they made a fighting game that plays as responsive online as it does offline. To support these ambitious efforts and hefty accomplishments, we are backing Mortal Kombat: Deception with the most extensive marketing campaign in Midway's company history."

Mortal Kombat: Deception pushes martial arts-style fighting and the Mortal Kombat franchise to new heights with an innovative fighting system, unparalleled depth and brutally intense action that will appeal to long-time Mortal Kombat fans as well as next-generation gamers. The game features lightning-fast, hand-to-hand and special weapons combat, secret and returning characters, new moves and combinations with death-dealing battles and all-new life-threatening environments.

Building upon the successful formula of the 2002 Midway release, Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance (on pace to eclipse 3 million units sold by year's end), Mortal Kombat: Deception is set to deliver the most ambitious fighting game to-date. Including four independent gameplay modes, multiple new fatalities per character, as well as being the first-ever 3D fighting game playable online both via PlayStation 2 broadband and Xbox Live, Mortal Kombat: Deception has quickly become one of the most anticipated titles this 2004 holiday season.

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation Coming To Xbox This Fall

Ubisoft is pleased to announce that its popular PC franchise CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, based the hit CBS TV series, will soon make its console debut on the Xbox by Microsoft. A combination of Ubisoft's top selling PC-CD ROM titles, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation and CSI: Dark Motives, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation for the Xbox offers twice the content.

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation for the Xbox is a first-person adventure game that puts the fate unsolved mysteries into the hands of the console gamer as they examine crime scenes, question witnesses and analyze evidence utilizing the latest in forensic equipment.

The adaptation of television's No. 1 show, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation for the Xbox includes all ten cases from the previous two PC releases and all the in-depth evidence examination and interactive lab functionality.

The No. 1 selling PC crime-adventure series returns with the latest release in the CSI: Crime Scene Investigation series by Ubisoft. Inspired by the hit show on CBS, CSI: Miami gives players the opportunity to experience forensic investigation first hand.

CSI: Miami includes all of the show's characters and exclusive voice-over by the cast. Play as Horatio Caine, Calleigh Duquesne, Tim Speelde, Erik Delko, Medical Examiner Alexx Woods, Detective Yelina Salas or Valera in the lab.

Forensic reconstructions taken directly from archived CSI: Miami footage puts players 'in the show'. Re-enactment cut scenes graphically portray key events as they are uncovered by the player. Customizable gameplay: Customizable gameplay options allow players to adjust settings to suit their skill level. Get help through a selectable 'hints' option that can help find hidden evidence and suggests the most suitable forensic tools for crime-solving.

Both games are due for release in November 2004. CSI: Crime Scene

ToCA Race Driver 2 Roars Into Stores For Playstation 2

Codemasters, a leading global publisher of interactive entertainment, announced that its acclaimed racing simulation game, ToCA Race Driver 2, has shipped to North American retail outlets for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, complete with online play.

"As ToCA Race Driver 2 has become a must-have for Xbox and PC racing fans, we're thrilled to bring this title to PlayStation 2 users," said Marc Bennett, North American President, Codemasters. "With head-to-head online play, stunning graphics and a huge variety of motorsports, we expect ToCA Race Driver 2 for PlayStation 2 to stack up well against other top racing titles this season."

Whether online or offline, players can compete in a multitude of motorsport events against a host of deadly rivals, all out to claim victory for

themselves. In ToCA Race Driver 2, it's all about winning and there's no room for Sunday drivers on these circuits. Drivers must fulfill their team's objectives to earn a place in the next event; with each success, drivers will unlock more tracks, vehicles and competitions.

Plus players can take it online and compete in races with up to 8 players simultaneously. The game's online multiplayer modes lets players devise their own championship for others to join, or search specifically for the kind of competition they want; alternatively drivers can just jump straight into the racing action. Players can judge their skill using the global rating system, or maintain a Friends List of favorite competitors. Full voice support allows all 8 players to talk with each other at any time, with no restrictions.

With more than 50 global racing circuits, ToCA Race Driver 2 comes to PlayStation 2 with extra content including an additional circuit, Spain's Catalunya, and an enhanced Championship structure that allows for 99 additional car and track combinations. Drivers will start as professionals - there are no boring 'tests' to take before playing the game - the first car is the awesome Ford GT!

Featuring more motorsports than any other racing game, ToCA Race Driver 2 is now available for PlayStation 2. Fans can get a taste of life in the fast lane with images and videos at the game's dedicated website at www.codemasters.com/tocaracedriver2

ToCA Race Driver 2 Key Features:

- * ToCA Race Driver 2 is a real simulator: real performance cars, real damage, real physics and real driver AI created by Codemasters' renowned motor racing game studio.
- * The most diverse range of motorsports in any one game - 15 different racing styles over 33 championships.
- * Start as a professional: get the top supercars from the start and drive the best.
- * 52 circuits - more real life and accurately modeled circuits than ever before.
- * High detail car models, each with individual realistic handling.
- * Realistic damage - you can't have a 'simulator' without damage.
- * Go beyond ultimate - PS2 hardcore 'Pro-Sim mode' for total realism!
- * Race your friends - head-to-head online gameplay for up to 8 players.
- * Global Rating System - gain or lose championship points depending on your results.
- * Full voice support - talk to everyone at once with no restrictions.
- * Friends List - invite your friends to race or join their races when they are online.

World's Top Game Players Battle for Cash

For the world's best video game players, getting the high score is no longer enough.

With total cash prizes of about \$400,000 spread out over eight tournaments, this year's World Cyber Games championships adds big money to the test of fast reflexes and superhuman eye-hand coordination.

The event, a culmination of national competitions held around the globe,

pits teams of players against each other in first-person shooters including "Counter-Strike: Condition Zero," "Unreal Tournament 2004" and "Halo."

In the world of virtual mayhem, these competitors are king.

"My parents didn't like it at all at first, but when I started traveling and making money out of it, they realized that I'm actually not just wasting my time on this," said gamer Michael Korduner of Stockholm.

The 20-year-old is among 700 players from 62 countries in the five-day competition, which ends Sunday with the winners crowned.

There's certainly no shortage of cash in the gaming industry today: The business rakes in \$10 billion annually in the U.S. alone.

The winning team in the five-on-five "Counter Strike" competition gets \$50,000, the runner-up team half that.

But Hank Jeong, president and CEO of International Cyber Marketing, which is putting on the competition, said the money takes a back seat to the bragging rights.

Jeong has erected an extravagant cyber city full of gaming machines, PCs and ethernet cable near City Hall where the competition will play out.

The World Cyber Games began in 2001 and included competitors from 37 countries in its first year. This year is the first time it has been held outside of Korea, and from now on organizers plan to hold it at different cities around the world, including Singapore next year.

In addition to the popular shooting titles, competitors will play "Need For Speed: Underground," a racing game with exotic cars, and "FIFA 2004," a fast-paced game of cyber soccer, played on PCs.

Matija Biljeskovic, a 20-year-old from Rockford, Ill., specializes in "FIFA 2004," and practices about 30 hours a week.

"My favorite aspect of FIFA 2004 is to see the way world-class, intelligent players adapt from one opponent's style of play to another," said Biljeskovic. The Yugoslavian immigrant said he grew up pooling pocket change with his friends just to rent a Nintendo machine.

Members of the U.S. national "Halo" championship team who were boarding planes for San Francisco on Tuesday morning said they were eager to exact a little payback for their early ouster from last year's championship in Seoul, Korea.

"I played in the same tournament last year and got knocked out, so I'm hoping for a little revenge," said Stephen "Proxa" Booth, an 18-year-old "Halo" team member from Bothell, Wash.

In Halo, aliens known as the Covenant try to wipe out the Earth's interstellar empire. The player and his teammates become marooned on the ring-world Halo and engage in guerrilla warfare against the Covenant.

When asked what his specialty was on the team, Booth sounded a little clandestine, looking to keep any secrets close to his vest.

"Let's just say it's important to control maps," said Booth, revenge firmly in mind.

On the Net:

<http://www.worldcybergames.com>

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Judge Challenges EU Position on Microsoft

A top European Union judge challenged the EU executive's reasoning in its antitrust court battle with Microsoft Corp. Friday, questioning why it opposed the U.S. software giant's setting industry standards.

Bo Vesterdorf, president of the European Union's Court of First Instance, threw down the challenge during the second day of hearings on Microsoft's request to suspend penalties levied on it while it pursues an appeal that could take years.

At the end of the day Vesterdorf said he would decide soon whether to freeze the penalties.

The EU decision requires Microsoft sell a version of Windows without audiovisual software and forces it to provide information so rival makers of servers can compete more easily.

The Commission found in March that Microsoft abused its operating system monopoly to hurt competitors. Microsoft, which must show "irreparable harm" to overturn that finding, says offering a degraded system would damage its good name.

Vesterdorf said the Commission had acknowledged that if Microsoft's media player were not available on all copies of Windows, then developers would face increased costs should they choose to write for both Windows Media Player and its rivals.

Commission lawyer Per Hellstrom said those increased costs would be balanced by the public interest in competition, which would lead to innovation and consumer choice.

Vesterdorf asked how the Commission would react if all of the major players in the field got together and agreed on industry-wide standards for audiovisual software.

"I have dreamed about that, about an open standard," replied Hellstrom.

"But you oppose an industry standard because it is brought about by the largest company on the market?" asked Vesterdorf.

When Hellstrom said a standard set by a Microsoft would preclude

competition, the judge replied:

"Isn't there a fault in your reasoning? Microsoft does not enter into exclusive agreements with (original equipment manufacturers)."

Hellstrom, who is Swedish, said the computer manufacturers effectively had no choice, since they were obliged to take Windows Media Player, and had no incentive to add other media players.

Windows Media Player cannot be removed by consumers. Windows Media Player, RealNetworks' RealPlayer and others are software that play CDs, DVDs and formats streamed across the Web, such as MP3.

Earlier the Commission said Windows Media Player was near a "tipping point" in usage that would cripple rivals such as RealPlayer in the same way that Microsoft illegally wrested away the Web Browser market from Netscape in the 1990s.

The Commission said RealPlayer once dominated the field, but Microsoft now has a 60 percent share, just as Netscape once dominated but now has 5 percent to Microsoft's 95 percent.

"If Microsoft secures another dominant position ... it will have the power of life and death over digital formats that can be used not just on computers but also on mobile phones and hand-held devices," said James Flynn, a lawyer for the Computer and Communications Industry Association.

Microsoft lawyer Jean-Francois Bellis said Microsoft should not be forced to break its flagship product into fragments.

"Microsoft is forced to create an adaptation of Windows that it would never consider creating otherwise, and it must label it with its valuable Windows trademark," Bellis said.

"It strikes at the very heart of Microsoft's business model and design of Windows."

RealNetworks presented a demonstration showing Windows would work even without a media player, but Microsoft showed video demonstrating Windows would "break" in that situation, with media files not playing properly.

Vesterdorf said Thursday that he believed it was possible Microsoft could win when the main case finishes years from now. And in weighing the balance of interests, as he must, he feared consumers could find the modified product confusing.

Thursday Vesterdorf heard arguments over whether Microsoft should be compelled to disclose information to help rival makers of server software connect more easily with other servers and to Windows desktops.

House Passes Tough Computer Anti-Spyware Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday voted to crack down on deceptive "spyware" that hides in users' computers and secretly monitors their activities.

By a vote of 399 to 1, the House moved to outlaw a range of aggressive

advertising and surveillance activities that have outraged consumers over the past two years.

Spyware can sap computing power, crash machines and bury users under a blizzard of unwanted ads. It can capture passwords, credit-card numbers and other sensitive data.

Spyware can end up on users' computers when they become infected by a computer virus or download games or other free programs off the Internet.

Texas Republican Rep. Joe Barton said computers used by his Energy and Commerce Committee were found to have been carrying roughly 60 different spyware programs.

The bill approved by the House would require software makers to get consumers' permission before loading programs on their machines that can collect information about them.

It would also prohibit a number of practices often associated with spyware, such as reprogramming the start page on a user's Web browser, logging keystrokes to capture passwords and other sensitive data, and launching pop-up ads that can't be closed without shutting down the computer.

Violators could face millions of dollars in fines.

"I am confident we have drafted a bill that protects consumers without impeding the growth of technology," said California Republican Rep. Mary Bono (news, bio, voting record), the bill's sponsor.

Congress must settle minor differences with other anti-spyware bills before any of them can become law.

The House is expected to vote Wednesday on an anti-spyware bill backed by members of the Judiciary Committee that would stipulate jail time for violators.

Negotiators did not have time to combine the two measures into one bill, a spokesman for the Judiciary Committee said.

Barton said at a press conference that House lawmakers would work to combine those two bills with one working its way through the Senate, hopefully by the time both Houses recess for the election at the end of the week.

The fact that the issue is relatively noncontroversial is a good sign, he said.

"Where there's a bipartisan will, we can do things," he said.

Bill Imposes Prison Time Over 'Spyware'

The House on Thursday passed the second bill in three days that would outlaw "spyware," irritating software that quietly monitors the activities of Internet users.

It would add penalties of up to five years in prison for people convicted of installing such programs without a computer user's permission.

The bill, known as the "Internet Spyware Prevention Act," passed 415-0. It would give the Justice Department \$10 million to crack down on companies and others that secretly install spyware and those who attempt to trick victims into disclosing personal details and financial information in e-mail scams popularly known as "phishing."

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., said such problems were growing and serious. Offenders under his bill would be sentenced for up to five years for secretly installing spyware to break into someone's computer and committing another federal crime.

Anyone caught installing spyware to change a computer's security settings or steal a victim's personal information - such as an e-mail address, telephone number or bank account number - could be sentenced up to two years in prison.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., said spyware was "quickly becoming one of the biggest threats to consumers on the Internet." She cited estimates that up to 90 percent of computers contain some forms of spyware. Lofgren said her daughter was recently victimized by electronic thieves in a phishing scam, persuading her in a forged e-mail to disclose personal information.

"Her thumb hit the send button and she thought, 'Oh, my goodness, what have I done!' We had to call and cancel all the credit cards and the like," Lofgren said. "This is something that preys upon people."

The House on Tuesday voted 399-1 to pass the "Spy Act," sponsored by Rep. Mary Bono, R-Calif., which would add hefty civil penalties over the use of spyware.

Lawmakers were widely expected to combine both proposals for a final vote by year's end.

The House bill passed Wednesday is H.R. 4661. The related bill approved Tuesday is H.R. 2929.

First Suit Filed Against Internet 'Spyware'

The U.S. government has sued a New Hampshire man in its first attempt to crack down on Internet "spyware" that seizes control of a user's computer without permission.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission on Thursday asked a federal court to shut down an operation that it said disables users' computers in an attempt to bully them into buying anti-spyware products.

Internet users unwittingly download the software when they visit Web sites that contain certain banner ads, the FTC said.

The software exploits a hole in Microsoft Corp.'s Internet Explorer Web browser to work its way onto computers without users' knowledge, according to the lawsuit.

A Washington consumer group, the Center for Democracy and Technology, had demonstrated the software to Reuters before it filed a complaint with the FTC in February.

The software hijacks Web browsers, causes CD-ROM trays to mysteriously slide open and slows down computers or causes them to cease working altogether.

A torrent of "pop up" messages urges consumers to buy programs called Spy Wiper or Spy Deleter to clean up the mess.

The FTC has taken action against companies that redirect browsers before but has never sued a company for secretly installing software.

Spyware comes in many forms - from keystroke loggers that can capture passwords, credit-card numbers and other sensitive data to relatively harmless programs that deliver pop-up ads.

Currently there are no national anti-spyware laws on the books, though several states have them. The House of Representatives passed two anti-spyware bills this week and another is pending in the Senate.

The FTC used deceptive-business laws to go after New Hampshire resident Sanford Wallace and his two companies, Seismic Entertainment Productions Inc. and SmartBot.Net Inc.

The FTC asked the court to shut down Wallace's operations and force him to return any money he has made.

Wallace could not be reached for comment.

"We're glad to see that they've taken some action; it was a really egregious case," Center for Democracy's Associate Director Ari Schwartz said.

The FTC was expected to discuss its suit at a press conference on Tuesday. An FTC spokeswoman declined to comment.

Court Hits 'Spam' Envelope-Stuffing Scam

A U.S. court has temporarily shut down an operation that used "spam" e-mail to drum up customers for a fraudulent work-at-home scheme, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission said on Tuesday.

Gregory Bryant and Nadira Bryant of Florida promised recipients of their unsolicited e-mail that they would earn \$4 for each envelope they stuffed and mailed as long as they paid \$24.77 for a start-up kit, the FTC said.

Those who paid for the kit instead got a CD-ROM explaining how to get others to pay money for an envelope-stuffing kit, the FTC said in a complaint. They were charged another \$24.95 after a 30-day trial period.

The two defendants, who operated under a variety of business aliases, did not honor refund requests, the consumer-protection agency said.

The two violated an anti-spam law because they faked return e-mail addresses and used deceptive subject lines like "Info You Have Requested" to trick recipients into opening them, the FTC said.

The scam also violates deceptive-business and telemarketing laws, the FTC

said.

The operation has been temporarily shut down by a U.S. court in Florida, and the FTC said it would press to shut it down permanently and return profits to consumers.

The defendants could not be reached for comment.

Copyright Bill Dies in Senate as Others Advance

A bill that would make it easier to sue online file-trading networks like Kazaa appeared on Friday to have died a quiet death, but other copyright bills sought by the entertainment industry continued to advance.

The Senate Judiciary Committee declined late on Thursday to take up a bill that would hold liable anyone who "induces" others to reproduce copyrighted material, a move observers said all but assures it would not become law this year.

The bill, known as the Induce Act, is designed to target online file-trading networks, which courts have so far shielded from entertainment industry lawsuits on the grounds they do not commit copyright infringement but merely make it possible.

The bill drew opposition from public-interest groups and consumer-electronics makers who said makers of digital-media players like Apple Computer Inc.'s iPod could be targeted as well.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Orrin Hatch postponed work on the bill last week and directed both sides to the negotiating table, but talks had stalled by Wednesday.

"We have come a long way, but have not yet reached a successful resolution," said Mitch Bainwol, CEO of the Recording Industry Association of America.

Though the committee declined to take action against file-trading networks, it did approve a measure that would direct the U.S. government to devote more effort to chasing down individual file traders.

Peer-to-peer users who share more than 1,000 songs or other copyrighted works would face up to three years in prison under the bill. U.S. copyright investigators would be able to file civil suits, which require a lower standard of proof than criminal cases, echoing tactics already used by the recording industry.

Those who secretly videotape movies when they are shown in theaters or distribute movies before their release date would face up to 10 years in prison.

The bill also designates the oak as the national tree.

Many of these provisions have already passed both the Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, but a staffer said they must be approved again to iron out differences.

Congress is scheduled to adjourn in the next few days but must come back

after the November elections to finish up work on spending bills needed to keep the government running.

U.S. Supreme Court Backs Do Not Call Registry

The U.S. Supreme Court Monday let stand a ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit upholding the constitutionality of the Federal Trade Commission's national Do Not Call Registry. The Supreme Court provided no additional commentary with its decision.

In May, three marketing groups, The American Teleservices Association, Mainstream Marketing Services, and TMG Marketing, appealed the lower court's ruling. They argued that the Do Not Call Registry infringed upon their right to free speech, that it unfairly exempted political and charitable calls, that consumers already had less restrictive means to block unwanted calls, and that the imposition of fees on telemarketers represented an unfair tax on protected speech.

In their Petition to the Supreme Court, the marketing organizations argued that "this case arises from a recent trend among governmental entities to restrict commercial speech discriminatorily in the name of privacy."

In February, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Do Not Call Registry represented a valid commercial speech regulation because it advanced substantial government interests while being narrowly tailored and that the fees telemarketers must pay to access the list are allowable because they defray the cost of lawful government regulation.

The Do Not Call Registry opened in June 2003, for the purpose of making it "easier and more efficient for consumers to stop getting telemarketing calls they do not want." By June 2004, consumers had registered 62 million phone numbers and had reported 428,000 possible violations. Some 200 companies have had more than 100 consumer complaints filed against them. The program remains popular with the majority of consumers.

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